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THE GEOGRAPHY OF ANCIENT ITALY

PART I

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It has been my practice during the five years that I have had the privilege of conducting a course of exercises in the topography and monuments of Latium and southern Etruria, for the members of the American School of Classical Studies in Rome, to devote part of the opening lectures to a sketch—I cannot call it more—of the extent and character of the evidence which has come down to us as to the aspect of Italy, and especially Latium, in antiquity. I find that the majority of our American scholars are by no means as well informed concerning the local and material surroundings of the Roman civilization, and the means at our disposal for studying them, as they are with regard to the intellectual, political, and artistic movements of that epoch. Many who could intelligently hold converse with Cicero and Quintilian concerning niceties of lexicography, or whose observations on legal practice and theory would have been accorded a respectful hearing from the old juriconsults, would, I fear, appear hopelessly puzzled if they were to be transported to Lutetia in the time of Julian and be under the necessity of looking up the shortest route to Constantinople; and I suspect that many a one even of those to whom both the *Reichs-Kursbuch* and the *Indicateur des chemins de fer de l'état* are household words, *saepe caput scaberet, vivos et roderet unguis*, if thrown back on the Antonine Itinerary and the Peutinger Table for planning a holiday on the Rhine or the Loire. And, if the truth must be told, as I look back on my own scientific equipment at the period when I first set eyes on the historic peninsula in question, I fail to recall any exceptional degree of preparation along these lines.

And it is perhaps not altogether unnatural that the geography of the *orbis Romanus* should be a subject whose devotees, especially in the Western Hemisphere, should be few in number. It is not only the lack which we Americans have of actual physical contact, in

our own land, with the topographical features of the ancient world, although that in itself would explain much. It is rather the fact that in a certain sense, a very real sense too, the comprehension of the noblest products of antiquity does not depend on an exact knowledge of the local conditions under which they were produced. The poets and the inventors of all ages understand each other; Webster and Calhoun could appreciate the invectives of Cicero; the theologian can make use of the arguments of Augustine; and the human being of whatever walk in life, provided he be sane and able to sympathize with his fellow-men, can bridge across the gulf of ages and the span of changing skies and hold converse with his kindred spirits. And yet I hardly think that one can draw much encouragement from the practice of the great men of the great creative periods of literature for the notion that they were wilfully negligent of the profit to be derived from travel, and from study of the documents pertaining to ancient geography: Vergil's, Milton's, and Goethe's varied journeyings, and the wealth of geographical and topographical erudition displayed in Dante and Shakespeare should not be forgotten.

But however this may be, we American scholars as a whole, no matter how strongly as individuals we may be attracted by ancient poetry, or ancient eloquence, or ancient art, still cannot be satisfied with regarding ancient civilization in only some of its aspects, or as manifested in only some of its products: what we really have before us, demanding our attention and study, is a tremendously complicated thing, the life of many millions of people, as it developed through a number of centuries, under certain definite and defining local conditions. If we understand to some extent what these conditions were, we shall be better prepared to understand the civilization itself which was the outcome of the impact exerted by geography and climate on races of mankind. And this familiarity with geographical conditions will be of help even when we come to deal with such etherial things as the works of the poets—in the case of Italy, where there is so much in the outer world to affect sensitive natures, one is tempted to say that it will then be especially of help. The superb glorification of Italy in Vergil's *Georgics*, and the unforgettable lines in which Horace

has immortalized his quiet retreat among the Sabine hills are—fortunately—not dependent on a knowledge of chartography or hydrography or geology for their appeal; but still I venture to say that he who knows the Saturnian land and has himself felt what it is to flee the smoke and bustle and noise of Rome, and after a good climb along the hillsides to slake his thirst at the Bandusian Fount, is in a better position not only to estimate critically the significance of these works, but to enter into sympathy with their authors. For, after all, the poets, too, are products of both temporal and local conditions.

But enough of preamble. It is my desire in these pages to give those among the readers of the *Classical Journal*, who may wish to know the evidence, a practical presentation of these matters which may serve them as a guide in their own efforts to become acquainted with the subject. This article has no pretension to originality, except indeed such originality as may arise from its being, in the form which it has actually taken, the outgrowth of my own experience; its purpose is not to add to previously existing knowledge, but to render accessible to the reader, in a serviceable form, matter which otherwise he would probably find it difficult to obtain. Bearing in mind the practical needs of American scholars, I shall limit myself to what is of especial importance for them, particularly as concerns the bibliography; if I do not always mention the most learned or the most brilliant works, I may at least hope that those to which I do refer will prove useful. And it will of course be familiar as a principle to those who avail themselves of this article, that what we are primarily concerned with is, not what the current views are on these matters—not what is the traditionally accepted doctrine of A, or the revolutionary theory of B or C—but rather what the material really is which alone can serve as basis for discussion; how this material can be gotten at for purposes of research; what are the sound methods of dealing with it; how the currently accepted notions of the geography of ancient Italy have come into existence; and, moreover, how we can perhaps revise these notions with the aid of new material or new processes of observation or deduction.

But before proceeding farther, it will be well to refer to a work

which deserves a place in the library of everyone who asks himself the question, not, "What was Italy in antiquity?" but, "How did the Romans express their own feelings toward Italy?" The distinguished geologist, Sir Archibald Geikie, at the evening of a long life devoted to the active prosecution of science, has reverted to those classical studies which, he tells us, were a joy to him in youth, but which since then had been taken up only fitfully and at long intervals as a restful refreshment. The result is one not only of the most charming, but of the most useful, books that have appeared in years in this general field.¹ Its perusal may be especially recommended to those who have been brought up on the doctrine that the Romans had no love of Nature. Two words of caution as to the use of this book seem to me to be in order; I trust the distinguished author would agree with me in them. First, we must guard against too hasty conclusions as to the degree in which we are in sympathy with people of other times and places when we find them expressing themselves as we ourselves should do under like conditions; those who have learned by sad experience the vastness of the gulf, in the realm of the emotions, that today is fixed, not only between individuals of different nationality and environment, but between different members of the same community, will be prepared to concede a considerable margin of uncertainty in these matters when dealing with the ancient Romans. And, second, remembering how many of the great names of Latin literature are not Roman, but are associated in origin with the rain-swept, misty part of Italy which lies north of the Appennines—one thinks first of Vergil and Catullus—and knowing that there is relation between the colors to which the eye has been accustomed and its ability to appreciate the beauty of landscape, we should exercise caution in using their expressions of appreciation as a basis for generalization with regard to the feelings of the average man among the population of the sunny regions of central Italy. I may add also the query that will occur to many readers, as to how far the rhetorical training of the Romans, to which my friend, Mr. Thomas Spencer Jerome, calls attention in his invaluable article

¹ A. Geikie, *The Love of Nature among the Romans during the Last Decades of the Republic and the First Century of the Empire*. London: Murray, 1912.

on "The Tacitean Tiberius,"¹ may have affected their expression of emotion in the presence of Nature; personally I do not feel that it seriously vitiates the character of the evidence collected in Sir Archibald Geikie's book.

Broadly speaking, the evidence for the aspect of Italy in antiquity falls into four categories: first, the country itself and its material remains now in existence; second, first-hand documentary evidence, chiefly inscriptions; third, documents transmitted from antiquity, especially the classical authors; and fourth, evidence transmitted from mediaeval or more recent times, as to which there is the possibility that it may represent the perpetuation of ancient tradition.

The country itself is a prime source of information. We still can see the same mountains—although in many instances stripped of the foliage and denuded of the soil which was theirs two thousand years ago; the same rivers—although sometimes a course is changed, or a stream has become more shallow, or a town that once stood proudly at a river's mouth is now high and dry, miles inland from the present coast; the same plains, fertile as they ever were, although the flora of Vergil and Horace has in part made way for such outlandish varieties as the maize of America or the eucalyptus of Australia. The main outlines of mountain, valley, and coast certainly have not changed: the level hilltops and the jagged peaks that once bore the simple huts of Latin shepherds or the fortified abodes of Hernican or Rutulian chieftains still remain, and although the railroad and the automobile have usurped the prerogatives of the chariot and the stage coach, it is still true that all roads lead to the city whose economic supremacy was writ large on the map of central Italy long before Romulus and his henchmen chose that site for their abode. And there are not many stretches of this Italian land that are devoid of monuments which bear eloquent witness to the civilization of Rome.

The standard map of Italy is that on the large scale of 1:25,000 prepared by the General Staff (*Stato maggiore*) of the Italian army a number of years ago, and revised at intervals since that time.²

¹ *Classical Philology*, VII (1912), 265-92.

² *Carta d'Italia*. Firenze: Istituto Geografico Militare.

Latium and southern Etruria will be found on sections 149, 150, and 158. All other recent maps are based on this; in particular, those which accompany Dr. Ashby's papers on the Roman Campagna. On a small scale, but extremely useful, is the new touring map,¹ a beautiful specimen of engraving; foglio 19 covers Latium and southern Etruria. There is also a somewhat more detailed map of this region which is very serviceable.²

As for general discussions of the natural features of Italy, it must suffice for me to mention three: those of Nissen,³ Philippson,⁴ and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.⁵

The extant remains have been published and discussed in an extremely extensive literature. For the present purpose it must suffice to mention briefly the following important works: the official Italian publications, especially *Notizie degli Scavi*, *Monumenti Antichi dei Lincei*, and *Bullettino d'Arte*; the *Annali*, *Bullettino*, and *Monumenti Inediti* of the old Istituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica; the *Roemische Mittheilungen* of the Imperial German Institute, and a recent work of its present first secretary in Rome, Professor R. Delbrueck, entitled *Hellenistische Bauten in Latium*, (Strassburg: Trubner, Band 1, 1907, B. 2, 1912); Dr. Ashby's

¹ *Carta d'Italia speciale per Automobilisti, Ciclisti e Touristi, alla scala di 1:250,000 in 35 fogli*. Bergamo; Istituto Italiano de Arti Grafiche. Cost, per "foglio," unmounted, L. 1.00; mounted on linen, L. 2.00.

² *Roma e dintorni*. Firenze: Istituto Geografico Militare. Scale, 1:100,000. Cost, mounted on linen, L. 3.50.

³ H. Nissen, *Italische Landeskunde*. Berlin: Weidmann, I, 1883; II, 1 and 2, 1902. The natural features are dealt with in Vol. I, pp. 88-465. The whole work is the best existing account of the geography of ancient Italy. Written by a well-equipped classical scholar and historian, in a delightful style, it is the *vade mecum* of all who occupy themselves with this subject. Its weaknesses are two: the thirty years and more that have elapsed since the preparation of the first volume and apparently of large portions of the second as well; and the scant attention which the author paid to the science of prehistoric archaeology or paleoethnology. A work of similar scope, by Professor Christian Huelsen, entitled *Historische Geographie Italiens*, is announced as in preparation in the new "Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft," edited by Geffcken (Heidelberg, Winter).

⁴ A. Philippson, *Das Mittelmeergebiet, seine geographische und kulturelle Eigenart*, 2. Aufl. Leipzig: Teubner, 1907. This work has the advantage of having been written by a professed natural scientist, and of covering the whole geographical area of which Italy forms a part.

⁵ Eleventh ed., Vol. XV, 1-6; by E. H. B(unbury) and T. A(shby). The whole article on Italy is excellent, as a compact statement of the present state of knowledge.

detailed and methodical publication of the classical topography of the Roman Campagna, in the *Papers of the British School at Rome*; the *Mélanges d'art et d'histoire* of the École française de Rome, and several monographs in the *Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome*; the work of the members of the American School of Classical Studies in Rome, published in *American Journal of Archaeology* and *Supplementary Papers of the American School of Classical Studies in Rome*; the late Professor G. Tomassetti's four-volume work, *La Campagna Romana antica, medioevale e moderna* (Roma: Loescher, 1910—), will prove more helpful for the post-classical period.

About the buried cities of Campania has grown up a large literature of their own. We are fortunate in possessing an admirable handbook in the late Professor A. Mau's *Pompeii*, translated by Professor F. W. Kelsey (New York and London: Macmillan). There is a "Bericht über die Fortschritte der historischen Geographie des römischen Westens" (1897-1909), by A. Schulten, in *Geographisches Jahrbuch*, Perthes (Gotha), XXXIV (1912). The extremely useful annual, *The Year's Work in Classical Studies* (London: Murray), contains reports on recent Italian excavations from the competent pen of Dr. Ashby.

As a general introduction to the study of the material remains of the Roman Empire as a whole, one would do well to read two able articles by Professor Haverfield,¹ in which the distinguished authority in Roman Britain sums up his views regarding the material available, and the methods to be pursued, and the eventual profit likely to accrue from the study of these things. It may be added also that if anyone should chance to approach the subject in the spirit of the dilettante, collecting Roman antiquities as many would collect Japanese bric-à-brac or Indian relics, and not caring for the literary and documentary evidence of all sorts to be weighed, or the serious human issues involved in this study, then the perusal of Professor Haverfield's articles should produce a most salutary and sobering effect.

¹ "The Roman World," in D. G. Hogarth, *Authority and Archaeology, Sacred and Profane* (London: Murray, 1899), pp. 296-331; "Inaugural Address" (of the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies), in *Journal of Roman Studies*, I (1911), pp. xi-xx.